

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 AGR-05 CU-02 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, TH

SUBJ: FLUT ACTIVITIES

REF: A) BANGKOK 0369 B) BANGKOK 2339

1. AS PART OF THE AGREEMENT ENDING THE "NATIONWIDE GENERAL STRIKE" ORGANIZED BY THE FEDERATION OF LABOR UNIONS OF THAILAND (FLUT), PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT AND FLUT PRESIDENT PHAISAN THAWATCHAINAN ON JANUARY 6, 1976 SIGNED AN AGREEMENT WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, PROVIDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD GUARANTEE FARMERS 2,500 BAHT PER TON OF PADDY AND CONTINUE SELLING RICE THROUGH RETAIL SHOPS AND TO UNIONS AT FIFTY BAHT PER THANG (15 KILOS) UNLESS AN AGREEMENT TO RAISE THE PRICE COULD BE REACHED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF LABOR, STUDENTS, FARMERS, AND THE GOVERNMENT.

2. AFTER A PERIOD OF INACTIVITY, AMID REPORTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S RICE RESERVE WOULD SOON BE DEPLETED, THE COMMITTEE MET TO SET A FAIR PRICE FOR RICE SOLD BY THE GOVERNMENT. FARMER, STUDENT AND LAVOR REPRESENTATIVES HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO AGREE WITH GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES OVER HOW MUCH FIVE PERCENT WHITE RICE REMAINS AFTER MILLING ONE METRIC TON OF PADDY. THE GOVERNMENT'S FIGURES SHOW A YIELD OF 390 KILOS WHILE THE OTHER PARTIES CLAIM 690. NEITHER SIDE IS

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WILLING TO ACCEPT THE FIGURES OF THE OTHER. WHEN REPORTS

CIRCULATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD INCREASE THE RICE PRICE WITHOUT WAITING FOR THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION, FLUT LEADERSHIP MET TO DISCUSS THEIR COURSE OF ACTION. RESERVING THE RIGHT TO CALL ANOTHER STRIKE, FLUT DECIDED TO ATTEMPT TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT. AT THIS POINT THE GOVERNMENT HAS AGREED TO SELL RICE TO ALL UNIONS AT 313 BAHT PER BAG (100 KILOS). WAREHOUSE ORGANIZATION AND LABOR DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS, ESTIMATING DAILY CONSUMPTION AT 400 GRAMS PER PERSON AND UNION MEMBERSHIP AT 50,000, HAVE AGREED TO SELL 30,000 BAGS PER MONTH TO THE UNIONS FOR MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES. THE RICE IS TO COME FROM GOVERNMENT RICE RESERVES, MARKET PURCHASES, AND PADDY RICE PURCHASED FROM FARMERS AT THE GUARANTEED PRICE BY THE WAREHOUSE ORGANIZATION. WAREHOUSE ORGANIZATION OFFICIALS CLAIM THEY HAVE BEEN PURCHASING PADDY AT THE GUARANTEED PRICE IN SEVERAL PROVINCES SINCE JANUARY 28. COMMENT: THE AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE'S OFFICE ESTIMATES ONE METRIC TON OF PADDY YIELDS 650 KILOS OF MILLED RICE ONLY 420 KILOS OF WHICH IS FIVE PERCENT. IT ALSO DOUBTS THE MAGNITUDE OR EFFECTIVENESS OF ANY WAREHOUSE ORGANIZATION PURCHASES, STATING MOST FARMERS ARE PRESENTLY SELLING PADDY AT 1800 BAHT PER TON.

3. IN THE POLITICAL AREA, THE FLUT EXECUTIVE BOARD HAS BEGUN REVIEWING THE CAMPAIGN PLATFORMS OF PARTIES TRYING TO OBTAIN FLUT ENDORSEMENT. LABOR PARTY REPRESENTATIVES HAVE APPEARED BEFORE THE BOARD BUT LEFT WITHOUT ANY PROMISE OF SUPPORT. IN AN EFFORT TO MINIMIZE THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY OUTSPOKEN DEMOCRAT SAMAK SUNTHONWET, PARTY DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL, WHO HAS SAID COMMUNISTS WERE INVOLVED IN THE GENERAL STRIKE, THE DEMOCRAT PARTY AFTER APOLOGIZING HAS SENT AN EMISSARY TO FLUT. THE EXECUTIVE BOARD HAS AGREED TO DISCUSS THE DEMOCRAT PROPOSALS LATER THIS MONTH.

4. TO REGULARIZE THE EXISTENCE OF A NATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION, FLUT HAS ASSUMED THIS ROLE WITHOUT LEGAL STATUS; A NEW CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS HAVE BEEN DRAFTED ESTABLISHING THE THAI LABOR CONGRESS (TLC). ONCE THE ORGANIZATION IS FORMALIZED FLUT WILL DISAPPEAR, AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ITS EARLIER RIVAL, THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THAI LABOR (NCTL) REF B, WILL BE OVERSHADOWED IF NOT SWALLOWED UP BY THE EIGHTY-FOUR UNION TLC.

5. COMMENT: LABOR UNION LEADERS SEE THEIR ROLE IN THE RICE DISTRIBUTION SCHEME AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF UNION MEMBERS AND A WAY TO INCREASE DUES COLLECTION; IT WILL ALSO IMPOSE A GREAT ADMINISTRATIVE

BURDEN AND OPEN THE DOOR FOG CORRUPTION. BY GIVING IN TO  
UNION DEMANDS FOR CHEAP RICE FOR THEIR MEMBERS THE GOVERN-  
MENT MAY BE HOPING TO RELIEVE THE PRESSURE TO MAKE THE  
PADDY PRICE GUARANTEE WORK FOR THE FARMERS.  
WHITEHOUSE

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